

Skinner Live Auction in Boston, Online Sales, and Open for Business in NYC

by Mary Ann Brown
Photos courtesy Skinner
All prices include buyer's premium

Fine gemstones achieved some of the highest prices realized at the Skinner Inc. June 9 jewelry sale held at its showroom in Boston. The 469-lot sale included antique and period jewelry. Results ranged from prices in the hundreds to the hundreds of thousands.

Gloria Lieberman, vice president and founder of the jewelry department at Skinner, put it this way in an e-mail: "Natural color leads the market. Kashmir sapphires are the strongest, particularly in the gemmy category, and of at the least five carats-plus."

At the top was the prime example, illustrating what Lieberman said—a circa 1910 Howard & Co. ring with a 5.43-carat Kashmir cushion-cut sapphire that created a scene of frenzied bidding that rose in \$25,000 increments to \$543,000 (est. \$100,000/150,000). It was exciting to watch and listen to the auction online, and I called my colleagues over to my desk when the bids on this lot started to rise into the stratosphere. They wanted to know why it was selling for so much money. I said it must be the origin of the stone, the maker, the size, and probably a combination of factors. This led me to do research on the Skinner website (www.skinnerinc.com).

Many readers already know why seemingly similar gemstones command vastly different prices, but I share this information for those who don't. April Matteini, G.G., Skinner Inc.'s regional director for Florida, addressed this question in a blog on the Skinner website as she discussed why the gems in this sale were expected to fetch strong prices. "When it comes to colored stones, geography is often as important as gemology. While it is their gemological properties that ultimately make them so coveted, collectors have long sought out colored stones based upon their place of origin.

"For sapphires, the scarcest and most rare stones come from Southeast Asia. To trace their origin, first we must travel high in the Himalayan Mountains, in very inhospitable terrain, to a deposit of sapphires discovered in the late 19th century. Today these stones are referred to in the trade simply as Kashmir. The original deposit was rather quickly depleted; later mining efforts were not fruitful. The majority of the sapphires in the market today with the Kashmir label were mined during the very short lifespan of that original mine, which accounts for their rarity. It is the unique and undeniably breathtaking visual characteristics of these stones that have drawn the attention of royalty and potentates for over a century."

She continued speaking about other coveted sapphires from nearby Burma (Myanmar), which is "slightly south and east on the map" from where the Kashmir variety were located. She writes, "Sapphires from Burma are exquisite. They are exceptionally transparent crystals with an even, intense blue hue. This color is often the color that all other sapphires are judged against."

A Tiffany & Co. platinum, 8.63-carat Burma sapphire, and square-cut diamond ring that descended through the Mellon family realized \$231,000 (est. \$100,000/150,000).

Another crowd favorite, an antique Burma ruby and diamond necklace, set

with 33 rubies weighing approximately 25.00 carats, sold for \$86,100 (est. \$50,000/75,000).

A number of pieces from the Coda collection were included in the sale and were among the highlights. According to the Skinner catalog, Corinne Davidov, an artist and illustrator, "launched The Coda Collection at the Marche aux Puces, in Paris, in the mid-1960s with the purchase of Pierre Turin's bronze medallion commemorating the 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs, the world's fair that heralded the modern age of design."

The cover lot, a circa 1925 signed Boucheron, Paris, Art Deco platinum, diamond, and gem-set plaque brooch, inspired competitive bidding and sold for \$39,975 (est. \$15,000/20,000). Lieberman commented, "Art Deco by the great French houses like Boucheron and Cartier continues to trend up."

Additional items from the collection "featuring costume jewelry, paintings, and objets d'art" will be available at Skinner in the fall of 2015.

Skinner Introduces Fine Jewelry Sales Online

In April Skinner held its inaugural online fine jewelry sale. In the presale press release, Victoria Bratberg, vice president and director of fine jewelry at Skinner, said, "We're thrilled to bring the spirit and convenience of online shopping to our fine jewelry auction" and commented that the offerings would include "a range of high-quality, affordable pieces."

When I asked for an update on how these sales were going, Gloria Lieberman wrote, "The online-only sales are finding an audience for a wide variety of buyers."

The cover lot, a pair of signed 18k white gold, dyed blue chalcedony, sapphire, and diamond earclips by Aletto Bros., realized \$7380 (est. \$3000/5000). A pierced plaque diamond clasp, pavé set with old mine- and old single-cut diamonds in a platinum-topped white gold mount with millegrain accents, sold for \$4305 (est. \$400/600).

Skinner Branches Out to New York City

In a blog published on its website in May, Skinner announced the opening of its regional office in New York City, "serving as a base for both longstanding and new clients in the tri-state area."

Karen Keane, CEO of Skinner, Inc., said that "establishing a base of operations in New York was a natural step...given our proximity to the city and the number of clients we serve there" and that "the expansion is a means to grow this already robust infrastructure, while also widening our reach to new customers, institutions, and collectors."

Victoria Bratberg will be "at the helm" of the branch, located in Manhattan at 415 Madison Avenue. She brings "nearly 13 years of experience in the auction and antique jewelry market, eight of those in New York" to the role and is also serving as the liaison between clients and other experts in the Skinner organization for "consignment and appraisal services for individual pieces and collections, large and small." The office is open on Tuesdays, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Phone (212) 787-1113 or e-mail <evaluations@skinnerinc.com> for assistance.

"Natural color leads the market."



I was watching the Skinner auction online when this signed Howard & Co. antique sapphire and diamond ring from the Lanier family of Indiana and New York came up. It was prong-set with a cushion-cut sapphire measuring approximately 9.82 x 9.10 x 6.60 mm and weighing 5.43 carats framed by ten old European-cut diamonds with an approximate total diamond weight of 2.50 carats. The ring was accompanied by an AGL document stating that the sapphire is Kashmir with no gemological evidence of heat, as well as a Gubelin report. Howard & Co. operated in New York from 1866 to 1922. After a rapid-fire round of competitive bidding the ring sold well above the high estimate for \$543,000 (est. \$100,000/150,000), making it the top lot of the auction.



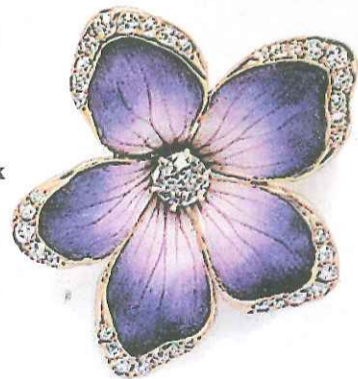
This pair of 7/8" long silver, pearl, and diamond earrings, each with a baroque pearl drop, sold for \$4613 (est. \$800/1200). The pearls measured approximately 11.50 x 9.50 and 12.50 x 9.50 mm and were not tested for origin. The total weight of the collet-set old mine-cut diamond tops was approximately 1.00 carat.

Several pieces of jewelry from the Coda collection were auctioned at the Skinner sale. This circa 1930 Art Deco 5 3/4" long silver and enamel pendant by Etienne David, France, with maker's mark (signed "ED") and guarantee stamp was one. According to notes in the Skinner sale catalog, "Little is known about Etienne David, whose shop was on the rue de la Paix in Paris. This pendant is typical of his work, which consisted of stylized flowers and geometric planes. See *European Designer Jewelry* by Ginger Moro, p. 44." The pendant sold well above the high estimate for \$5228 (est. \$1500/2000).



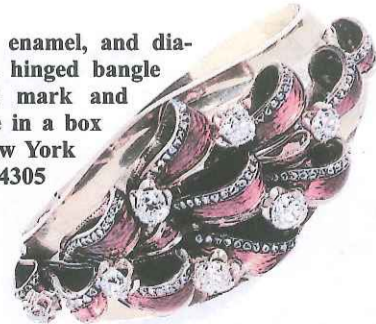
This antique 1 1/2" long diamond star and crescent brooch in a rhodium-plated silver-topped gold mount, set with old mine-cut diamonds with an approximate total weight of 4.00 carats, sold for \$5535 (est. \$2000/3000).

Designed as a violet set in 14k gold with old European- and old mine-cut diamonds, this 1 3/8" long Art Nouveau enamel and diamond pendant/brooch realized \$1722 (est. \$400/600).

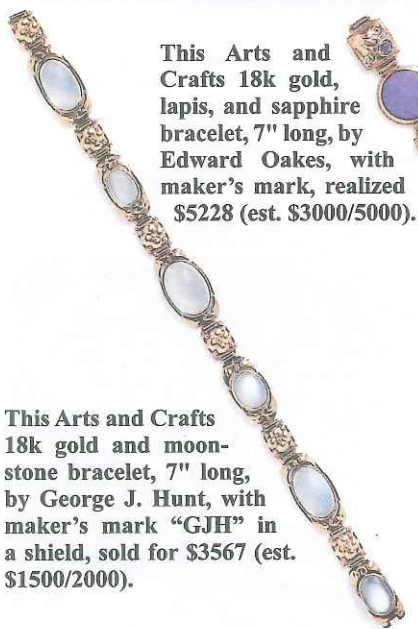


This antique gold and rose-cut diamond ring, collet-set with a foil-back rose-cut diamond measuring approximately 9.50 x 9.00 mm, within a scrolling mount, sold for \$7995 (est. \$3000/5000).

This antique 18k gold, enamel, and diamond adjustable-length hinged bangle bracelet, with maker's mark and guarantee stamps, came in a box for Charlton & Co., New York and Paris. It brought \$4305 (est. \$2000/3000).

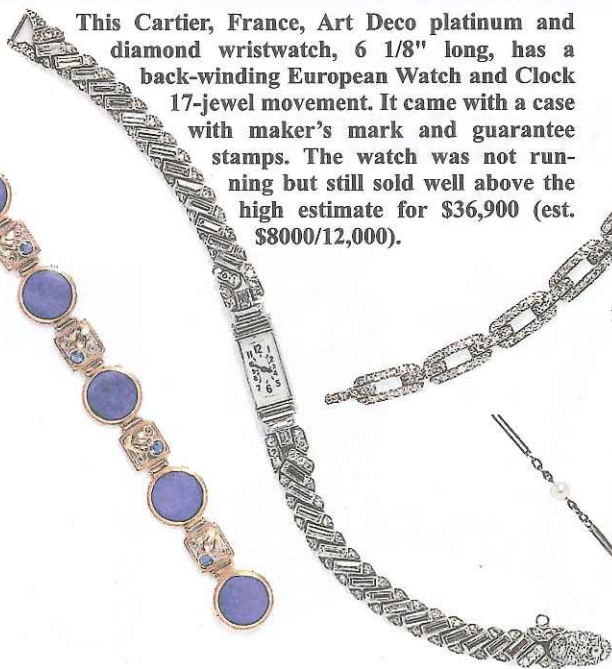


This Art Deco platinum, carved emerald, and diamond ring was set with a high-domed cabochon emerald carved with floral and foliate motifs, measuring approximately 13.50 x 13.50 x 11.50 mm. The mount was pavé-set with old European, transitional, and single-cut diamonds. It realized \$7380 (est. \$4000/6000).

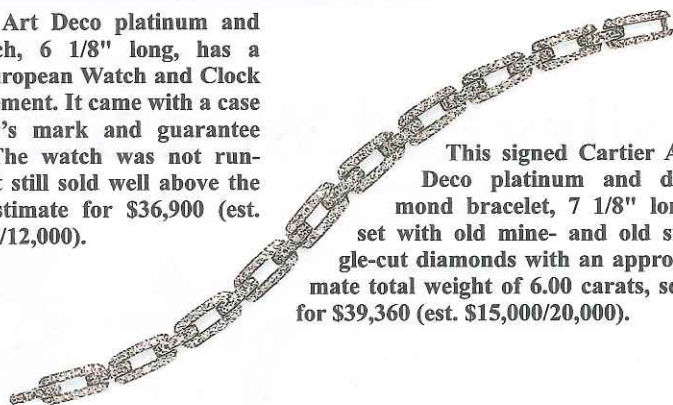


This Arts and Crafts 18k gold, lapis, and sapphire bracelet, 7" long, by Edward Oakes, with maker's mark, realized \$5228 (est. \$3000/5000).

This Arts and Crafts 18k gold and moonstone bracelet, 7" long, by George J. Hunt, with maker's mark "GJH" in a shield, sold for \$3567 (est. \$1500/2000).



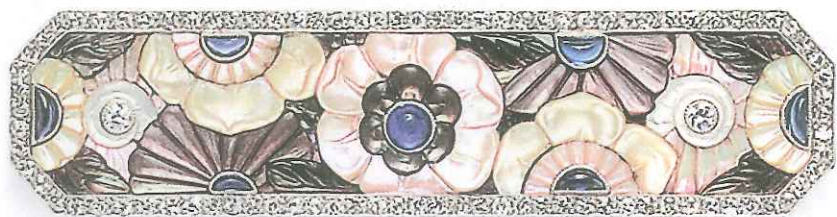
This Cartier, France, Art Deco platinum and diamond wristwatch, 6 1/8" long, has a back-winding European Watch and Clock 17-jewel movement. It came with a case with maker's mark and guarantee stamps. The watch was not running but still sold well above the high estimate for \$36,900 (est. \$8000/12,000).



This signed Cartier Art Deco platinum and diamond bracelet, 7 1/8" long, set with old mine- and old single-cut diamonds with an approximate total weight of 6.00 carats, sold for \$39,360 (est. \$15,000/20,000).



This pair of 14k white gold, diamond, and jade pi ear pendants sold for \$4920 (est. \$800/1200) in the Skinner online jewelry auction that concluded June 26.



The cover lot of the June 9 sale was this circa 1925 signed Boucheron, Paris, fine Art Deco platinum, diamond, and gem-set plaque brooch, 3 1/8" long, with French guarantee stamps. From the Coda collection, it realized \$39,975 (est. \$15,000/20,000).

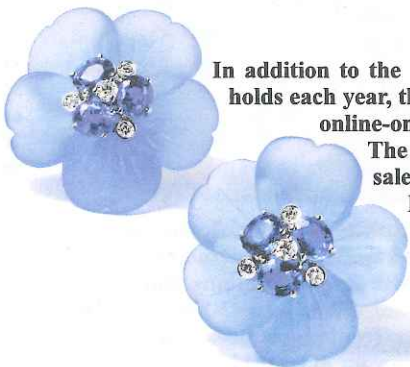
This signed 18k gold, carved gemstone, and diamond suite by Trio, including a necklace with an interior circumference of 15" and 1" long earclips, was "a pretty, pretty piece," according to Lieberman, who was the auctioneer at the podium when this lot sold. She congratulated the winning bidder in the room, saying, "You fought, you won it, and it looked great on." The popular suite realized \$27,060 (est. \$10,000/15,000).



This group of four diamond brooches with platinum-topped 18k gold mounts did not find a buyer at the Skinner sale even though Lieberman gave helpful suggestions about how one could creatively arrange them to wear. She said, "These are charming Edwardian brooches—four of them. Put them on a ribbon, and slide them across it." Each 1 1/8" x 1 1/4" brooch was set with old mine- and rose-cut diamonds that had an approximate total weight of 6.25 carats. The suite had an estimate of \$5000/7000. Lieberman said Skinner was "waiting for a final on the set of pins that did not sell during the sale" when I contacted the jewelry department to see if there had been any activity on the suite.



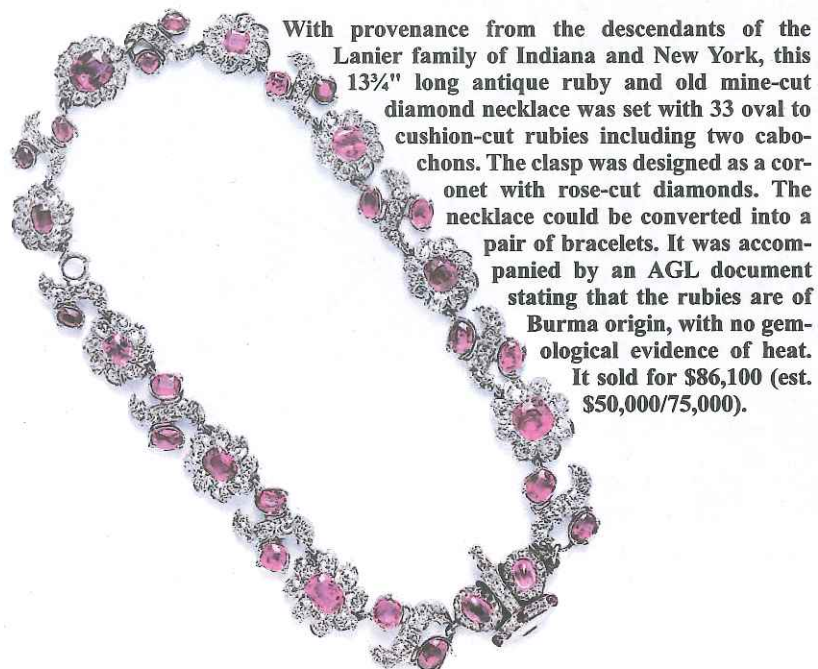
This 65" long French Art Nouveau 18k gold chain of fancy navette-form links, with export stamps, brought \$8610 (est. \$3000/5000).



In addition to the live fine jewelry sales Skinner holds each year, the company began selling in an online-only auction format in April. The cover lot of the inaugural sale was this pair of signed Aletto Bros. 1 1/8" long, 18k white gold, dyed blue chalcedony, sapphire, and diamond earclips that realized \$7380 (est. \$3000/5000).



This signed Tiffany & Co. platinum, sapphire, and diamond ring descended through the Mellon family. The rectangular emerald-cut sapphire measured approximately 11.28 x 9.70 x 8.26 mm and weighed 8.63 carats and was flanked by square-cut diamonds weighing approximately 1.13 and 1.11 carats. The shoulders were channel-set with fancy square-cut diamonds. Accompanied by an AGL document stating that the sapphire is classic Burma, with no gemological evidence of heat, and a retail replacement valuation from Tiffany & Co. from 2005, the ring sold for \$231,000 (est. \$100,000/150,000).



With provenance from the descendants of the Lanier family of Indiana and New York, this 13 3/4" long antique ruby and old mine-cut diamond necklace was set with 33 oval to cushion-cut rubies including two cabochons. The clasp was designed as a coronet with rose-cut diamonds. The necklace could be converted into a pair of bracelets. It was accompanied by an AGL document stating that the rubies are of Burma origin, with no gemological evidence of heat. It sold for \$86,100 (est. \$50,000/75,000).



This signed Tiffany & Co. antique pearl necklace, 15 3/4" long, is composed of 61 pearls graduating in size from approximately 4.35 to 7.96 mm. The collet-set clasp has an old European-cut diamond weighing approximately 1.10 carats in a silver-topped gold mount. It was accompanied by a GIA report stating that 60 of the pearls are natural, saltwater, Pinctada species, with no indications of treatment, and that the pearl one from the end is cultured. The necklace sold to a floor bidder for \$30,750 (est. \$10,000/15,000). Lieberman said, "Natural pearls continue to be strong, but again color and quality are important."